

ANNEX EEEE

CRISIS COUNSELING

A. PURPOSE

1. This annex defines the responsibilities and assistance available through the West Virginia Office of Behavioral Health Services.
2. Emotional and psychological reactions to catastrophic events vary with the specific nature of the disaster. Recent research indicates that panic, incapacitating shock, suicide, and other extreme psychosocial behaviors are uncommon reactions. Instead, victims and disaster workers frequently devote their energy to coping with readjustment problems. Mental health problems tend to become more prominent as the long-term disruptions in normal life become increasingly apparent. Crisis counseling can enable disaster victims to continue coping with their new situation and prevent serious psychological impairment. Section 416 , Robert T. Stafford Disaster and Emergency Assistance Act, PL 93-288, as amended by Public Law 100-707 authorizes the President to provide training and services to alleviate mental health problems caused by or exacerbated by major disasters. The Act reads as follows:

“Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training. The President is authorized to provide professional counseling services, including financial assistance to state or local agencies or private mental health organization to provide such services or training of disaster workers, caused or aggravated by such major disaster or its aftermath”.

PART I. CRISIS COUNSELING WITHOUT A PRESIDENTIAL DISASTER DECLARATION

B. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

1. Preparedness

Counseling providers will develop crisis counseling delivery plans, train their employees to recognize and meet disaster related mental health problems, and exercise their plans.
2. Recovery
 - a. The public or private mental health agencies in the affected area will activate and implement their crisis counseling delivery plans.
 - b. These agencies will coordinate their efforts to reduce duplication of effort, thus assuring a more efficient use of counseling resources.

- c. A reporting system will be established to record the process of the affected people and to serve as a source for future program evaluations.
- d. The West Virginia Office of Behavioral Health Services will assist in providing counseling services.
- e. The assigned public or private mental health agency will declare the end of the disaster insofar as the delivery of mental health services are concerned and resume normal work routines.
- f. Counseling providers will facilitate the transfer of any long run disaster-induced clients to the care of regular counseling programs.
- g. An evaluation of the crisis counseling provided will be undertaken and the lessons learned from it incorporated in a revised crisis counseling delivery plan.

C. TASK ASSIGNMENTS

1. State

- a. The West Virginia Office of Behavioral Health Services will assist local mental health organizations train their personnel for crisis counseling activities.
- b. The West Virginia Office of Behavioral Health Services will assist in providing crisis counseling to disaster victims.

PART II. CRISIS COUNSELING WITH A PRESIDENTIAL DECLARATION

2. Eligibility

- a. Public agencies and private non-profit mental health organizations which are determined by the Secretary U.S. Health and Human Services (USHHS) to be capable of providing the professional mental health crisis counseling services or mental health training of disaster workers needed as a result of a major disaster are eligible for a grant award.
- b. Disaster victims and disaster workers located in the designated major disaster area who have mental health problems which were caused or aggravated by the major disaster or its aftermath are eligible for crisis counseling.
- c. Disaster workers who are available on short notice to provide services in a major disaster are eligible for crisis counseling training.

3. Program Limits

- a. Contracts and grants awarded under this section normally expire 180 days after the first day services are provided under such contracts and grants. The USHHS Secretary may recommend that the FEMA Regional Director extend the 180-day period for up to 30 days; the Associate Director may extend contracts and grants beyond that time period.
- b. There is no predetermined grant award. Applicants submit a budget proposal. Program funding is determined by the FEMA Associate Director and the USHHS Secretary based on the needs outlined in the grant application.

D. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

1. Assistance under Section 416 becomes available after at Presidential Declaration.
2. The DHHR/Office of Behavioral Health Services will work with local public or private non-profit mental health organizations to determine the crisis counseling needs brought about by the disaster.
3. The Governor or the State Coordinating Officer may file a request for assistance under Section 416 with the FEMA Regional director within 14 days from the declaration date.
4. This request must:
 - a. Estimate the number of disaster victims and affected disaster workers who may need crisis counseling services and the number of disaster workers who may need training to provide these services;
 - b. Identify the geographical areas in which the need exists;
 - c. Estimate the period during which assistance under Section 416 will be required and the total funds that will be required to provide such assistance;
 - d. Describe the types of mental health problems caused or aggravated by the major disaster or its aftermath; and
 - e. Identify the State and local agencies and private mental health organizations capable of providing professional mental health crisis counseling to disaster victims or training of disaster workers.
 - f. Describe how outreach and education will be accomplished
 - g. Contain descriptive data

- h. Include a Program Plan
- 5. Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) reviews the grant request and recommends the level of Federal support.
- 6. Upon approval by the FEMA Administrator, the USHHS Secretary provides the approved services either by direct grant or contract.
- 7. Approved local mental health organizations implements crisis counseling training and services in accordance with prescribed financial and time limits.

E. TASK ASSIGNMENTS

State

1. Governor

Within sixty (60) days following a major disaster declaration by the President, file a request with the FEMA III Regional Director for assistance. Immediate crisis counseling services should be requested within fourteen (14) days of a declaration. (CFR 44, Part 206.171).

2. Department of Health and Human Resources, Office of Behavioral Health Services

a. If requested by the local mental health facility, the Department may deploy a cadre of trained specialists to supplement the local response.

b. Assimilate and analyze data received from local facilities to determine degree of assistance needed.

c. Assist local organizations make application for assistance under Section 416, PL 100-707, if a need is determined.

d. Agencies receiving funds under this program work directly with the State Coordinating Officer to minimize duplication of effort among disaster relief organizations.

e. Reporting agencies are required to submit the following reports to the USHHS Secretary:

- (1) Progress reports to be submitted at the end of the first 30 days of the contract period and every 30 days thereafter.

- (2) A final report to be submitted within 60 days from the date upon which the contract terminates; and
- (3) Any additional reports as the USHHS Secretary prescribes including those, which may be, required enabling the Federal Coordinating Officer to carry out his functions.

F. AUTHORITIES AND REFERENCES

1. Section 416, Robert T. Stafford Disaster and Emergency Assistance Act, PL 93-288, as amended, "Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training"
2. Code of Federal Regulations, Title 44, Part 206.171
3. American Red Cross Disaster Services Program (ARC 3000 Services)

G. DEFINITIONS

CMHS: Center for Mental Health Services

CRISIS: Any life situation resulting from a major disaster or its aftermath which so affects the emotional and mental equilibrium of a disaster victim and disaster workers that professional mental health counseling services should be provided to help preclude possible damaging physical or psychological effects.

CRISIS COUNSELING: The application of individual and group treatment procedures which are designed to ameliorate the mental and emotional crises and their subsequent psychological and behavioral conditions resulting from a major disaster or its aftermath.

USHHS Department of Health and Human Services

SAMHSA: Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration